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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 56th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. SENGWE (Zimbabwe)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK (A/C.5/51/L.57 and A/C.5/51/L.58)

1. The CHAIRMAN drew the Committee's attention to document A/C.5/51/L.57, on the status of documentation, and to document A/C.5/51/L.58, which contained the proposed programme of work for the second part of the resumed fifty-first session.

2. With regard to documents that were to have been submitted to the Committee at the second part of the resumed session, he had been informed by the Secretariat in connection with agenda item 112, that the comprehensive policy paper to examine all issues related to the question of all additional expenditures referred to in paragraphs 10 and 11 of annex 1 to General Assembly resolution 41/213, which the General Assembly in its resolution 51/220 had requested the Secretary-General to prepare, would be issued on 31 May 1997. The related report of the Advisory Committee would not be available until ACABQ had completed its report on the budget proposals in the fall. Accordingly, it was proposed that the matter should be taken up at the third part of the resumed session in September.

3. On the question of travel and related expenses, under agenda item 116, he had been advised that the report of the International Civil Service Commission which had been requested by the General Assembly would not be available until September.

4. Under agenda item 120, three reports were supposed to have been submitted pursuant to Assembly resolution 51/226. On the question of the family leave programme, he had been informed that, in view of the relatively short period between the first and second parts of the resumed session, the Office of Human Resources Management had not had sufficient time to gather the relevant information and would therefore submit the report at a later date. In connection with the report of the Secretary-General on the findings of the review of the first cycle of the performance appraisal system, he had been informed that, since the report on the first year of experience with the system was due to be considered by the Staff Management Coordination Committee in mid-June, it would not be possible to provide the Fifth Committee with a full report on the subject until September 1997. With regard to the third report, relating to the situation of staff members on the redeployment list, he had been informed that a conference room paper would be issued towards the end of the following week.

5. Finally, also under agenda item 116, the Secretary-General had been requested in General Assembly resolution 51/221 to present no later than 1 March 1997 a report on programme performance for the biennium 1996-1997 which the Assembly had decided to consider as a matter of priority during the first part of its resumed session. Following the statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services at its fifty-fifth meeting, the Committee had concluded that it was the responsibility of the Department of Administration and Management to report on that subject.

6. Mr. ACAKPO-SATCHIVI (Secretary of the Committee) drew the Committee's attention to a number of scheduling changes in the proposed programme of work contained in document A/C.5/51/L.58. In particular, the item on gratis personnel provided by Governments and other entities had been added to the agenda of the formal meeting to be held on 13 May.

7. Ms. PEÑA (Mexico) thanked the Secretariat for ensuring that the Spanish version of document A/C.5/51/L.58 had been reissued and the mistakes which her and other Spanish-speaking delegations had pointed out corrected. Such mistakes entailed unnecessary expenses for the Organization and every effort should therefore be made to prevent their recurrence.

8. As for the proposed programme of work, it would be helpful to know when the Secretariat planned to make available addendum 2 to the document on gratis personnel. She noted further that only one formal meeting had been allocated for consideration of the report of the Secretary-General on the programme performance report for the biennium 1996-1997 and wondered why such an important item had not been included in the agenda for the informal consultations for the second part of the resumed session.

9. Mr. YUSSUF (United Republic of Tanzania), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the time allocated for the consideration of certain important agenda items, such as the question of compensation for death or disability attributable to peacekeeping service and the question of gratis personnel provided by Governments and other entities, was not enough to enable the Committee to take informed decisions. Additional time was also needed for consideration of the question of the support account under agenda item 140. Finally, given the extraordinary circumstances in which the Organization currently found itself, adequate time should also be allocated for consideration of the item on the reform of the procurement system to enable the Committee to take a decision thereon.

10. Ms. SANTIPITAKS (Thailand), in her capacity as coordinator of the Non-Aligned Movement Working Group on peacekeeping operations, said that the Movement attached great importance to the question of compensation for death or disability attributable to peacekeeping service and adequate time should therefore be allocated for its consideration during the second part of the resumed session.

11. Ms. RODRÍGUEZ ABASCAL (Cuba) thanked the secretariat of the Committee for ensuring that a corrected Spanish version of document A/C.5/51/L.58 had been issued. The errors contained in the earlier document pointed to the need for greater supervision in the Office of Conference and Support Services as well as the need for the Office to be given the resources which it required to perform its duties more efficiently.

12. Her delegation shared the views expressed by the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the comments made by Mexico on the programme performance report for the biennium 1996-1997. She also took note of the alacrity with which the Secretariat had issued two separate versions, one of which was a sales publication, of the Secretary-General's proposals for the reform of the

Organization and regretted its failure to produce with the same dispatch reports which the General Assembly had requested two years previously. It was important to know when the Secretary-General's report on gratis personnel provided by Governments and other entities would be made available so that informal consultations on that item could be scheduled.

13. She noted, finally, that only one informal meeting had been allocated for consideration of the various reports of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) and wondered whether it would be possible for the Committee to complete its consideration of the reports in the limited time available. She recalled that the Assembly had decided that the thematic reports of OIOS should first be considered by the relevant intergovernmental bodies before they were submitted to the Fifth Committee. She therefore requested that that practice should be followed with respect to the thematic reports of OIOS on the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements and on the United Nations Environment Programme.

14. Mr. SIAL (Pakistan) said that his delegation shared the views expressed by previous speakers on the need to allocate sufficient time for consideration of the item on compensation for death or disability attributable to peacekeeping service so that the Committee could take a decision on the matter at the second part of the resumed session.

15. Mr. BISTA (Nepal) regretted the Bureau's failure to allocate sufficient time for consideration of such important pending issues as compensation for death or disability attributable to peacekeeping service. It was imperative that that issue be settled at the second part of the resumed session.

16. Mr. SULAIMAN (Syrian Arab Republic) also shared the views expressed by previous speakers on the need to allocate sufficient time for consideration of the question of compensation for death or disability attributable to peacekeeping service and the report of the Secretary-General on gratis personnel provided by Governments and other entities. He noted further that two informal meetings had been scheduled for Wednesday of that week to consider the item on the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping forces in the Middle East, an item that was of great importance to Syria. He wished to request that at least one of those meetings should be postponed until Friday of that week or until the following week to enable the Syrian delegation to participate in an effective manner.

17. Ms. SHENWICK (United States of America) requested a written explanation from the Secretariat of why documents requested by the Fifth Committee had not been made available. She was also concerned at the decision of the International Civil Service Commission not to consider at its recent session the question of travel entitlements, despite having been specifically mandated by the General Assembly to do so.

18. Mr. HANSEN-HALL (Ghana) said that the Bureau should review its proposed programme of work with a view to allocating adequate time for the consideration of such important items as the report of the Secretary-General on the programme performance report for the biennium 1996-1997, the support account, the report of the Secretary-General on gratis personnel provided by Governments and other

entities, the reform of the procurement system, and compensation for death or disability attributable to peacekeeping service.

19. Mr. SAHA (India) said that adequate time should be devoted to the issues of gratis personnel, death and disability compensation and procurement reform.

20. Mr. WATANABE (Japan) said that in view of the importance of peacekeeping operations, it was vital that the Committee's work on that question should be well organized. Delegations should come forward with their own proposals on how best to approach the matter, and the Secretariat should indicate whether it would be possible to adopt a more flexible programme if the need arose.

21. Ms. RODRÍGUEZ ABASCAL (Cuba) said that since UN 21 was due to be considered by the Advisory Committee before being submitted to the General Assembly, it would be useful to know the views of the Advisory Committee on that document in order to facilitate debate in the Fifth Committee.

22. The CHAIRMAN said that he would try to take account of the wishes of all delegations in formulating the Committee's programme of work.

23. Mr. HALBWACHS (Controller) said that the General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to submit, through the Advisory Committee, a report containing proposals for achieving savings as called for in its resolution 50/214. The Secretary-General had submitted that report as document A/C.5/50/57/Add.1, which comprised an item-by-item list of programmes and activities which would be affected by the cost-saving measures. In issuing that report, the Secretary-General had fully apprised Member States of the likely impact on mandated programmes and activities. The proposed programme budget for 1998-1999 would state explicitly what had happened to all the outputs which had been postponed or cancelled. At the present time the Secretariat had no new information to pass on to Member States. In accordance with the Programme Planning Regulations, the usual programme performance report would be compiled after the biennium.

24. Ms. PEÑA (Mexico) said that document A/C.5/50/57/Add.1 had been issued in August 1996. Both the Advisory Committee and the General Assembly had stated that that report contained insufficient information to ascertain the true impact of the cost-saving measures on all mandated programmes and activities. A relevant report should be submitted as requested. The unavailability of documents and the lack of compliance with the wishes of Member States undermined the whole reform process, with its emphasis on efficiency. Her delegation was also amazed at attempts to justify a failure to issue documents by referring to existing regulations.

25. Ms. GOICOCHEA (Cuba) endorsed the remarks made by the representative of Mexico. The request for a report indicating the impact of the budget reductions on the programme of work had formed part of the consensus leading to the adoption of General Assembly resolution 51/221. Consensus had been reached on the understanding that such a report would be issued in a timely manner. While it was true that, in accordance with the Programme Planning Regulations and Rules, programme performance reports were issued after the close of a biennium, in the present instance the General Assembly's request referred to a special

one-off report on the impact of cost-saving measures. In any event, the relevant report should be submitted as soon as possible, and certainly during the second part of the resumed session.

26. Mr. FATTAH (Egypt) said that the justifications adduced by the Controller were unconvincing. Member States were entitled to know the criteria used by the Secretariat in cutting back on programmes and activities.

27. Mr. SARDEGNA (Director, Buildings Management Service) said that he had received a request for information on the commitment of resources under section 31 (Construction, alteration, improvement and major maintenance). That information had been supplied on 27 March 1997. Much had changed since then and he was pleased to report good progress on many of the building projects currently under way.

28. It was hoped to start reconstruction of part of the United Nations garage at the beginning of June. The work would continue until the end of August. Between 240 and 280 parking spaces would be out of use during the summer, and 246 spaces would be put back into operation when the project was over. As an interim measure, the Secretariat had provided an additional 26 parking spaces along the 48th Street drive. The reconstruction was a long-term project occasioned by years of salt damage to the metal reinforcing bars in the garage floor.

29. The Buildings Management Service had been slow in starting many other projects earmarked for the current biennium. The reduction in resources for buildings maintenance had meant that it had been necessary to review and re-prioritize. It was very difficult to plan long-term projects with wildly fluctuating resources. However, since the last quarter of 1996 there had been more stability in the budget system, which had made it possible to plan ahead with greater confidence. A number of projects had been obligated if not actually started, and would be well under way by the end of the biennium.

30. Ms. RODRÍGUEZ ABASCAL (Cuba) asked when Member States could expect to receive the report on garages at main duty stations, as requested in paragraph 73 of General Assembly resolution 50/214, and whether it was true that spaces in the United Nations garage in New York were rented to people who had nothing to do with the United Nations.

31. Mr. STÖCKL (Germany) said that, in view of the long-term nature of building commitments and projects, it was a false economy to target buildings maintenance whenever short-term cuts were required. The United Nations should also make more effort to accommodate the needs of disabled visitors.

32. Ms. SHENWICK (United States of America) asked the Director to comment on press reports that, during renovations to the Secretary-General's residence, United Nations staff involved in the project and outside contractors had been found watching pornographic films for which the Organization had received a bill of thousands of dollars. If the reports were true, her delegation wished to know exactly how much money was involved and what remedial action had been taken.

33. Mr. GOUMENNY (Ukraine) said that the nineteenth special session of the General Assembly was due to take place in New York in June, and his delegation was concerned that insufficient parking facilities would be available to delegations during that period. He asked the Director whether it would be possible to reduce the number of parking spaces to be taken out of service.

34. Ms. INCERA (Costa Rica) said that her delegation was concerned that the number of parking spaces to be taken out of service had risen to 280 from the projected figure of 243 that had been supplied in March. Having recently been the recipient of a notice threatening to tow her car away, she also wished to know who issued such notices and where cars were towed.

35. Mr. SARDEGNA (Director, Buildings Management Service) said that the report on garages was in the final stages of preparation and would be submitted shortly. A number of staff members worked at United Nations Headquarters outside normal working hours, which gave the impression that vehicles other than those with diplomatic licence plates were constantly using the garage. It was not United Nations policy to let outsiders use the parking facilities. Generally speaking, the role of the Buildings Management Service was to try to accommodate the wishes and requirements of all delegations to the extent possible.

36. Considerable time and effort had been invested in making the building suitable for disabled visitors, but he agreed that much remained to be done in order to turn United Nations Headquarters into a fully accessible building for the disabled.

37. He had certainly heard the reports that contractors had been viewing pornographic films at the Organization's expense, and the matter had been referred to Security, which had been asked to carry out a thorough investigation. No feedback had been received to date. If the reports were true, such behaviour was obviously unacceptable and would be dealt with accordingly.

38. Parking for the special session of the General Assembly in June would, of course, be accommodated within the work plan for the garage renovation. The main purpose of the "No Parking" signs, which both the Garage Administration and Security had posted, was to remind members of the United Nations community to be considerate of other drivers when parking in and around the Secretariat complex.

39. Mr. STÖCKL (Germany) said that perhaps an information sheet on accessibility for persons with disabilities could be produced to respond to future inquiries. He would also be interested to learn how parking was assigned to staff members, as an element of the conditions of service at various duty stations.

40. Ms. SHENWICK (United States of America) said that the report requested on the parking issue should include information on total operating costs for the garage and an explanation of the difference in charges to delegations and to staff members.

41. In the view of her delegation, the Office of Internal Oversight Services should be investigating the irregularities involving the Secretary-General's residence. The matter should be resolved without delay, since several months had elapsed and payments might already have been made to the contractors involved.

42. Ms. INCERA (Costa Rica) said that perhaps signs reminding delegations not to double park or block access routes would be more effective than signs stating that cars would be towed, if such was not the intention.

43. The CHAIRMAN said that, pursuant to a request by members of the Committee at its fifty-fifth meeting, an explanation of the circumstances which had compelled the interruption of the MX public broadcasting system during the Secretary-General's address of 17 March 1997 concerning his reform proposals would be provided.

44. Mr. RIESCO (Director of Conference Services) said that, while the MX public broadcasting system was not the responsibility of Conference Services, he had looked into the matter with the office responsible.

45. The instruction to the sound engineers to interrupt the broadcast had come from the Spokesman for the Secretary-General. The intent had been to protect the relative confidentiality of the information in the statement and to respond to past complaints from delegations that the media were receiving information before it had been provided to them. The Spokesman had also sought to avoid a situation where a crush of correspondents in the conference room would ask delegations and the Secretary-General for statements immediately following the address. It had also seemed that those organizations with access to the MX public broadcasting system had an unfair advantage over those without it.

46. The Spokesman apologized if Committee members objected to that action, and realized that it should have been cleared in advance with the Bureau of the Committee.

47. Ms. INCERA (Costa Rica) said that the Office of the Spokesman for the Secretary-General did not have the authority to change procedures for a meeting of a Main Committee of the General Assembly. Such actions must not be repeated, and her delegation was awaiting a formal apology from the Spokesman.

48. Her delegation believed that members' desire to receive information before it was released to the press was fully justified. However, it was entirely acceptable, in the interest of greater transparency, for the press and delegations to receive information simultaneously. The justification given regarding questions from correspondents was thus unacceptable. Delegations had the right to make statements to the press as they saw fit, and the rights and privileges of Member States should not be violated because of a statement by the Secretary-General. The fact that some organizations did not have access to the MX public broadcasting system should have no bearing on actions by the Secretariat. The Secretariat had no authority to take such decisions without prior consultation.

49. Mr. FATTAH (Egypt) agreed that it was unacceptable for the Secretariat to take such action. He supported the request for a formal apology.

50. Ms. PEÑA (Mexico) said that provision could have been made for a press briefing for organizations without access to the system within minutes after the statement had been delivered.

51. Mr. STÖCKL (Germany) said that the Spokesman or his superiors should provide further explanation, especially since the Secretary-General had advocated greater transparency within the Organization. He also believed that the Spokesman should make a public apology.

52. Mr. MOKTEFI (Algeria) said that his delegation shared the concern expressed, and joined the call for a public apology.

53. The CHAIRMAN requested the Director of Conference Services to convey to those responsible the dismay of the Committee regarding the violation of rule 60 of the rules of procedure, and the view that a formal apology was expected.

54. He said that, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 51/216, an informal meeting had been held on the question of the participation of the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA) and the Coordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System (CCISUA) in the work of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC). After hearing the three parties concerned and the observations of Member States, he had invited FICSA and CCISUA to resume their participation in the work of the Commission without any preconditions, and had entrusted the technical arrangements to the secretariat of ICSC.

AGENDA ITEM 140: ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY ASPECTS OF THE FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS (continued) (A/51/892)

AGENDA ITEM 123: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING FORCES IN THE MIDDLE EAST (continued) (A/51/684/Add.1)

(a) UNITED NATIONS DISENGAGEMENT OBSERVER FORCE (continued) (A/51/405/Add.1-2)

(b) UNITED NATIONS INTERIM FORCE IN LEBANON (continued) (A/51/535/Add.1-2)

AGENDA ITEM 125: FINANCING OF THE ACTIVITIES ARISING FROM SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 687 (1991) (continued)

(a) UNITED NATIONS IRAQ-KUWAIT OBSERVATION MISSION (continued) (A/51/658/Add.1-2 and A/51/683/Add.1)

(b) OTHER ACTIVITIES (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 126: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS MISSION FOR THE REFERENDUM IN WESTERN SAHARA (continued) (A/51/763 and Add.1 and A/51/847)

AGENDA ITEM 132: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING FORCE IN CYPRUS (A/51/755 and Corr.1 and Add.1 and A/51/851 and Corr.1)

AGENDA ITEM 133: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS OBSERVER MISSION IN GEORGIA (continued) (A/51/793 and Add.1 and A/51/855)

AGENDA ITEM 134: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN HAITI (continued) (A/51/764 and Add.1 and A/51/861)

AGENDA ITEM 138: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS MISSION OF OBSERVERS IN TAJIKISTAN (A/51/784 and Add.1-2 and A/51/850)

AGENDA ITEM 154: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS TRANSITIONAL ADMINISTRATION FOR EASTERN SLAVONIA, BARANJA AND WESTERN SIRMIUM (continued) (A/51/520/Add.1-3 and A/51/872)

AGENDA ITEM 157: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS SUPPORT MISSION IN HAITI (continued) (A/51/825 and A/51/861)

55. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the general report of the Advisory Committee contained in document A/51/892, said that it summarized some of the main findings of the Advisory Committee regarding peacekeeping operations.

56. The review of the reports of the Secretary-General had benefited from the introduction of the new budget cycle authorized by General Assembly resolution 49/233. In addition, changes made in the format of the presentation of peacekeeping budgets had facilitated the review of the Secretary-General's estimates and performance reports, although there remained considerable room for improvement. While it was now easier to estimate resource requirements for a given budget period, there was a need for consistency in providing satisfactory explanations in the supplementary information provided and in the format of budget documents. The standard cost and ratio manual had greatly facilitated preparation of budgets, but deviations from standard costs and ratios and mission-specific requirements should be explained more clearly and consistently. The Secretariat should also provide the most up-to-date information on budget implementation for the period preceding the budget period under consideration, which would enable the Advisory Committee to evaluate better the resources being requested.

57. The Secretariat and administrations in the field should address as a matter of urgency the cumbersome process of preparing budget estimates. With the help of new technology, standards should be developed for compiling information in the field for review at Headquarters for inclusion, with minimal change, in reports to the General Assembly. To that end, the relevant units of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Administration and Management should reassess their respective roles with a view to avoiding any potential duplication in the budget preparation process. There was also an urgent need to address problems related to the implementation of the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) both at Headquarters and in the field. Despite the efforts of Secretariat officials to respond quickly to requests for information, it was often not supplied in a timely manner owing to a lack of

effective information- and data-processing systems in the relevant units. Accordingly, ACABQ was awaiting with great interest the results of the special audit of IMIS requested pursuant to financial regulation 12.7.

58. There was a need to improve budget control and provide for effective monitoring budget implementation. The Advisory Committee had previously identified numerous lapses in budget administration and control. Effective measures must be taken to enhance control over payments of and accounting for a variety of allowances, including mission subsistence, clothing and welfare allowances. The Secretariat had indicated that measures were under way to streamline the administration of some of those allowances. Peacekeeping operations were often conducted in unstable environments, and flexibility must be accorded to the Secretariat in the administration of the resources authorized by the General Assembly. However, it appeared that the Administration had often interpreted that flexibility too loosely, and when large over-expenditures were incurred without seeking authority from ACABQ or the General Assembly the Secretariat might risk losing that flexibility. Of equal concern were so-called "roll-overs" and large amounts of unliquidated obligations. The Advisory Committee requested that its observations on those issues should be reviewed carefully, the causes identified and corrective measures introduced.

59. Asset and inventory management continued to be a serious weakness. It appeared that, in the majority of cases, the Administration at Headquarters and in the field did not have full knowledge of the inventory in stock. The Advisory Committee had found most of the information on inventory in performance reports or budget estimates misleading, inadequate, and often unreliable. As a result there had been a tendency for the Secretariat to request more stock purchases. ACABQ was looking forward to further reports, particularly on the development of an effective asset management system.

60. The Advisory Committee had requested that proper procedures should be followed in accounting for and treatment of miscellaneous income, especially from the sale of equipment or from reimbursement for the use of United Nations-owned facilities. The coordinating role of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General vis-à-vis specialized agencies, funds and programmes must be clarified so as to allow adequate note to be taken of their presence in the operational area.

61. The relationship between the Administration in the field and the military should ensure that the military did not incur expenses or enter into contracts with third parties on behalf of the United Nations without its full involvement. Furthermore, more should be done to defend the interests of the United Nations vis-à-vis authorities in the areas of operations. The Advisory Committee was very concerned about non-compliance with status-of-forces and mission agreements. The United Nations was spending millions of dollars in situations which could have been avoided if the relevant agreements had been followed. The unilateral introduction of conditions which impeded the orderly removal of United Nations assets from a mission being liquidated should also not be allowed to recur. As indicated in the Advisory Committee's report (A/51/892, para. 23), the United Nations should vigorously seek to ensure that all provisions of status-of-forces and mission agreements were respected and implemented by all the parties.

62. For improvement to be achieved in the areas pointed out in the reports of the Advisory Committee, it was essential to have experienced and qualified staff for such areas as administration, budget and finance. In its review of the reports before it, the Advisory Committee had noticed that reports of a better quality clearly resulted from the presence of experienced chief administrative officers and other qualified United Nations staff in the missions concerned. There was a need for the Secretariat to take effective steps to ensure that experienced United Nations staff were motivated to volunteer for field work. As indicated by the Advisory Committee in its general report (A/51/892, para. 15), when staff were assigned to the field, proper personnel management should ensure that, upon their return, there was successful reintegration in a manner that would take full advantage of the skills acquired and promote the career aspirations of the staff concerned.

63. Including the reports of the Advisory Committee, the Fifth Committee had before it more than 40 reports on peacekeeping operations. In order for the Fifth Committee to conclude its work within the time allotted for the second part of the resumed session, an abbreviated debate and short related statements on the reports were essential. He had therefore decided not to go through each of the Advisory Committee's reports in detail.

64. The length of the reports varied from two pages to over 40 pages. In a number of instances, the Secretariat had revised its submission following testimony given and questions raised in the Advisory Committee. In the majority of cases, the Advisory Committee had accepted the estimates proposed by the Secretary-General. Nevertheless, where the Advisory Committee had felt that a number of issues remained to be resolved, it had not recommended an additional appropriation or assessment in respect of requests made in the context of performance reports.

65. He was prepared to answer questions on the recommendations made by the Advisory Committee in the individual reports when they were taken up either at a plenary meeting or in informal discussions.

66. Mr. NAJEM (Lebanon), speaking on behalf of the Group of Arab States, noted that in its resolution 50/89 B of 7 June 1996, the General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the financing of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), and to include in it a full evaluation of the damage resulting from the Israeli attack on the headquarters of the Force at Qana on 18 April 1996. That report was now before the Committee (A/51/535/Add.1). He was astonished to note that the report concluded that it was for Member States, and not Israel, to bear the costs arising out of the Israeli aggression. The Group of Arab States could not accept that Member States should bear any of those costs. Member States already contributed significantly to peacekeeping missions, and it was inconceivable that any further costs should be added to those contributions. The States on whose behalf he spoke appealed to all Member States to refrain from accepting responsibility for any costs related to the Israeli aggression and demanded that Israel, the aggressor, should bear all the costs without exception. He also requested the Chairman to postpone the informal consultations on the agenda item for several days.

67. The CHAIRMAN said that the Bureau would consider all requests for adjustments to the programme of work.

68. Mr. MOKTEFI (Algeria) said that he supported the statement made by the representative of Lebanon; there could be no question of asking Member States to make financial contributions to pay for damage caused deliberately by the aggressor. His delegation refused to be involved in defraying the costs of an incident for which it was not responsible.

69. Mr. FATTAH (Egypt) said that he, too, fully endorsed the statement made by the Lebanese representative, and hoped that the latter's request would be reflected in the draft resolution on the agenda item. With regard to the report of the Advisory Committee (A/51/684/Add.1), he requested clarification of the statement in paragraph 38 that the total costs involved were approximately $1,773,618, excluding about $200,000 in hospital costs for three soldiers.

70. Ms. ACHOURI (Tunisia) said that she supported the Lebanese representative's request for the postponement of informal consultations on the item, and likewise urged Member States not to comply with the request that they should defray the costs relating to the Israeli aggression in Lebanon, as such a request had no legal or political basis.

71. Mr. SULAIMAN (Syrian Arab Republic) said that he, too, fully supported the Lebanese statement, and failed to see the logic of asking Member States to pay for the damage resulting from the Israeli aggression.

72. Mr. ELMONTASER (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that he endorsed the views expressed by the representative of Lebanon and other speakers. He attached great importance to the decision to be adopted and hoped that it would meet the concerns of Member States.

73. Mr. YUSSUF (United Republic of Tanzania), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that there had not been time for the Group of 77 and China to adopt a position on the issue. He requested the Bureau to postpone consideration of the matter until later in the week.

74. Mr. SALEEM (United Arab Emirates) said that he, too, agreed that it was inconceivable that Israel should commit aggression against the headquarters of the Force and then ask the United Nations to pay for the damage. He supported the request for postponement of the informal consultations.

75. Ms. SHENWICK (United States of America) said that she had no objection to postponing the informal consultations on the matter, although she doubted whether the issues could be resolved in a few days' time. It was her understanding, however, that it was the role of the Fifth Committee to analyse the budget submitted by the Secretary-General and determine whether the amounts requested were sufficient, whether the resources would be put to purposes consistent with the mandate given by the General Assembly and whether all expenses should be included under the assessed component of the budget. It was not the role of the Fifth Committee to single out certain expenses in an assessed budget proposed by the Secretary-General and attempt to charge them to specific Member States.

76. The CHAIRMAN said that there were several instances on record in which the Committee had taken such decisions on proposed expenditures, such as those relating to the international human rights tribunals.

77. Mr. MIRMOHAMMAD (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the intention of the Fifth Committee, as reflected in paragraph 7 of General Assembly resolution 50/89 B, had been to obtain an assessment of the damage caused by the party responsible. The Committee was now in the process of realizing its intention. He agreed that the costs arising from the damage to the UNIFIL headquarters should be borne solely by the party responsible.

78. Ms. SHENWICK (United States of America) said that she would be grateful if the Chairman could provide specific examples of situations in which the Committee had determined that a component of the Secretary-General's budget should not be funded through the means proposed, and had simultaneously determined that the amounts involved should be assessed against a particular Member State, rather than being regarded as a collective responsibility. In the case of the international tribunals, Member States had disagreed with the scale of assessments proposed by the Secretary-General and had decided to use an alternative method of financing.

79. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said, with regard to the clarification sought by the representative of Egypt, that in paragraph 38 of its report the Advisory Committee provided information obtained from the report of the Secretary-General and from the Secretariat. The report indicated that the total costs was $1.7 million, excluding an amount of $200,000. He would leave it to the Secretariat to inform the Fifth Committee as to which entity would be responsible for that amount.

80. Ms. SHENWICK (United States of America) asked whether the expense in question might have been borne, not by the United Nations, but by a Member State, pursuant to an agreement to provide medical expenses to officers of a peacekeeping mission who were injured in the line of duty. If not, she wished to know whether the Fifth Committee was now going to discuss any possible expense that might be associated with the incident in question. It was her understanding that paragraph 38 of the report of the Advisory Committee referred to expenses borne by the United Nations that were associated directly or indirectly with the incident at Qana. She requested clarification of what the amount of $200,000 represented.

81. MR. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions) said that the Secretariat had provided information to the Advisory Committee regarding the treatment of the amount of $200,000, and it was for the Secretariat to provide that information to the Fifth Committee.

82. Mr. HOSANG (Director, Peacekeeping Financing Division) said that he would reply to the questions raised at the next meeting.

83. Mr. FATTAH (Egypt) said it was surprising that the Secretariat was not ready to answer questions on a report that had been studied in detail in the

Advisory Committee. He awaited the reply by the representative of the Secretariat.

84. Mr. MONAYAIR (Kuwait) expressed appreciation to the Advisory Committee for including in its report on the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM) (A/51/683/Add.1) three paragraphs relating to the issue of overpayment of mission subsistence allowance. He requested the representative of the Secretary-General to comment on whether any progress had been made since the information had been provided to the Advisory Committee, especially in the light of the forthcoming issuance of the Secretary-General's report on the measures taken to address the issue.

85. Mr. HOSANG (Director, Peacekeeping Financing Division) said that a draft of the report had been received and was being reviewed; the report would be issued within the next few days.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.